



Palmer Transit Oriented Development Draft Conceptual Downtown Plan

Progress Presentation 9/26/17

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State of The State

Process

- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Northeast Corridor options, inland route, New Haven to Boston.
- Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (NNEIRI) (Positive Tier 1 Assessment)
- Need Governor's signature for phase 2 study
- Universal bi-partisan local and state support.
- State wide transportation plan ongoing (October completion?)

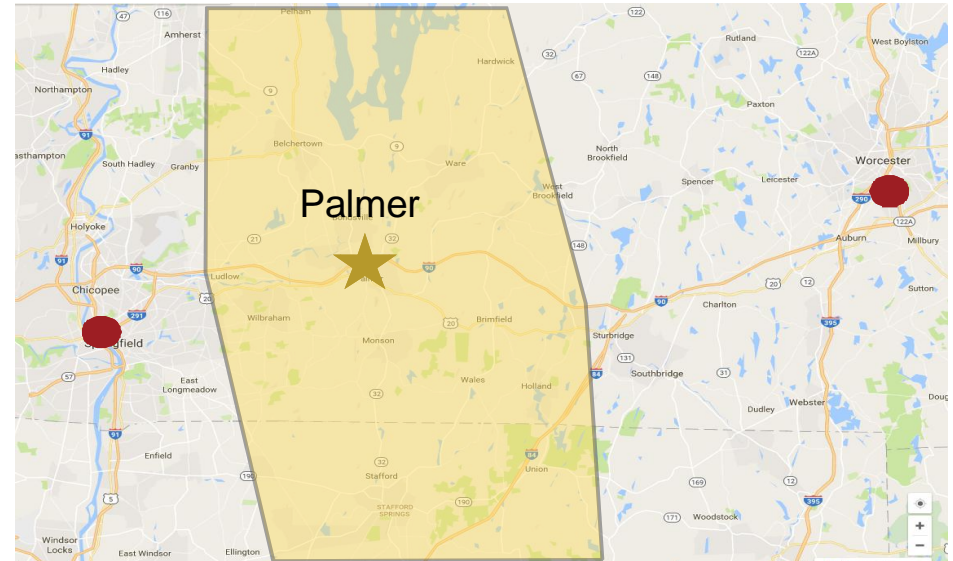
Palmer in the short term

- Create the buzz and local support
- Insure downtown location for station
- Position for future grant and development opportunities
- Have a pre-emptive “plan”

REGIONAL TRANSIT STOP = DESTINATION

DOWNTOWN PALMER

- More people in and around downtown
 - Rail ridership
 - Regional connection / destination
 - Reduction of auto dependency
 - Pedestrian activity to support retail
 - Infill and redevelopment opportunities
 - Increased market support
 - Increased economic development opportunities
 - Increased real-estate values (over time)



Goals for Palmer ??????????

- Rediscover sense of community pride
- Create vibrant walkable mixed use community
- Bring activity / residents back to downtown
- After 5 alive
- Stabilize/ preserve and enhance
- Initiate SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES
- Capitalize on current and future reinvestment
- Increase grand list

Short term victories lead to long term success

Overcoming the initial inertia

Focus of This Study (Conceptual Planning)

What It Is:

- Review of available data
 - Palmer Community Plan, NNEIRI EA, Shook Kelly MP (casino), Station Site Concept Plans, Three Rivers Revitalization Study, Prior Grant Applications, FRA NEC Plans
 - Limited Stakeholder Meetings: PRA, Town, Sen. Lesser
- Consultant's initial assessment
 - Downtown opportunities and constraints
 - Redevelopment opportunities
 - Urban design enhancements

Focus of This Study (Conceptual Planning)

What It Is Not: (but will eventually need to be)

- A definitive plan grounded in public outreach
- A market based development program
- Recommendations vetted with appropriate technical backup
- A definitive action plan (THIS PLAN SHOULD NOT BE USED AS THE SOLE SOURCE OF DOWNTOWN PROPERTY ACQUISITION OR DEVELOPMENT DECISION MAKING)

Purpose of This Study

- Illustrate municipal commitment to a downtown station stop
- Support the downtown station site location alternative
- Support continued rail studies
- Assist with further state required commitments
 - Governor signing
 - MA. Transportation Plan
- Preliminary identification of opportunities / constraints / issues
- Preliminary urban design recommendations and potential capital projects.
- Start “The Buzz”



"The Diamond"








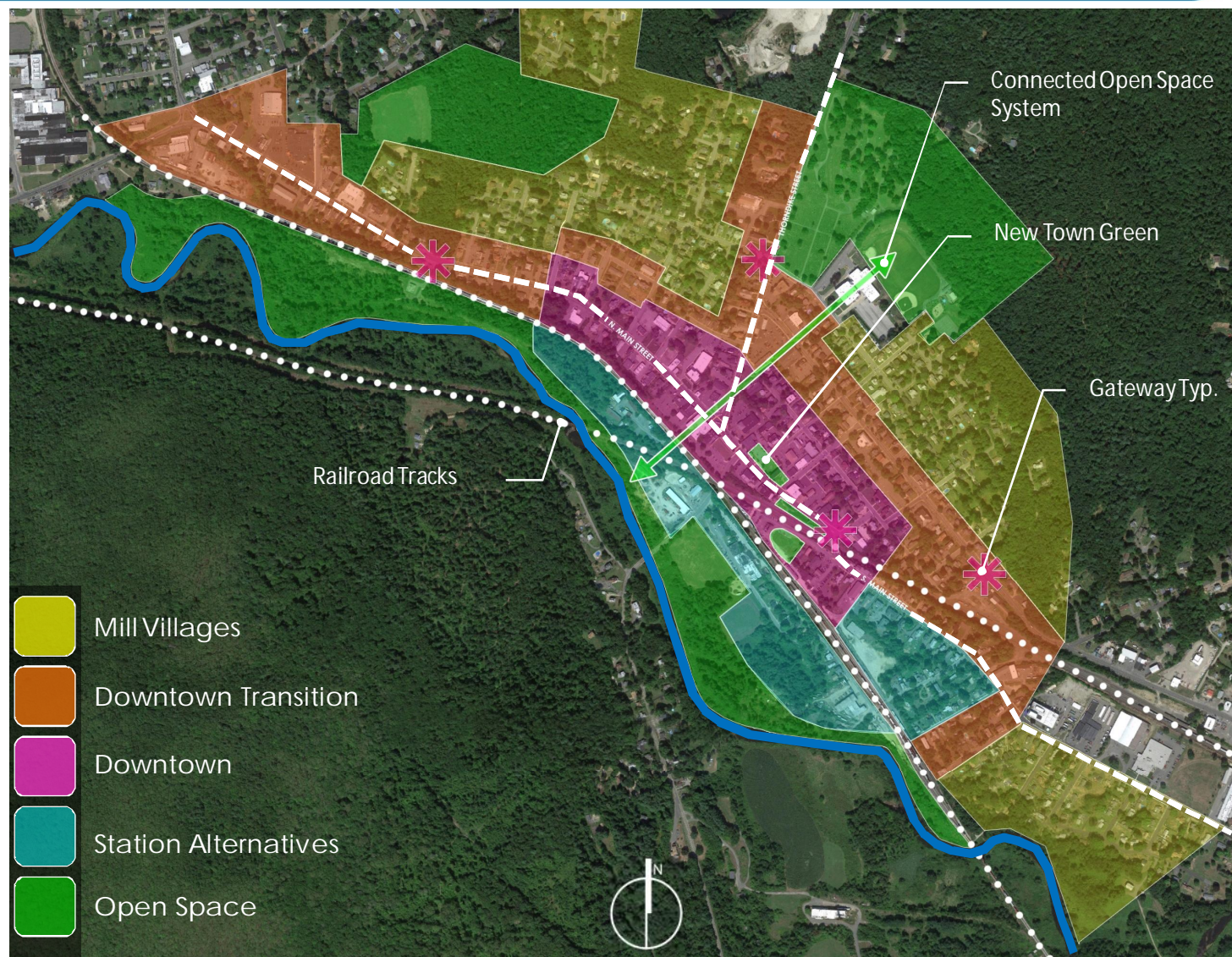
Station Site Options

Study Area

- Generally ¼ Mile From Station
- Downtown Central Focus
- State To Determine Final Site Location



-  **MILL VILLAGES**
 - Maintain residential scale and character.
 - Allow appropriately scaled new development and home conversions
 - Connectivity to station and downtown.
-  **DOWNTOWN TRANSITION**
 - Mixed or single uses.
 - Non mandatory first floor commercial
 - Normal tree belt and sidewalk widths
 - Building line to match surrounding neighborhood
-  **DOWNTOWN**
 - Mandatory first floor retail / commercial uses.
 - Parking to the rear of buildings
 - Shared parking and municipal lots
 - On street parking
 - Wide "activity" sidewalks and streetscapes
 - Build to lines to within 5' of back of walk
 - 2- 4 story structures
-  **STATION AREA**
 - Many options to consider
 - Grab and go and residential uses
 - Flood plain parking options
 - Regional bus hub
 - Regional bike connectivity
 - Resolve bus and direct pedestrian downtown connectivity
-  **PRIMARY OPEN SPACE**
 - Open space systems connected via streetscapes
 - New "Town Square" at Walnut and Main. Road reconfigurations required
 - Center of downtown activities
 - Quaboag River passive recreation with connections to station site and downtown
 - Converse Middle School expanded municipal and event uses

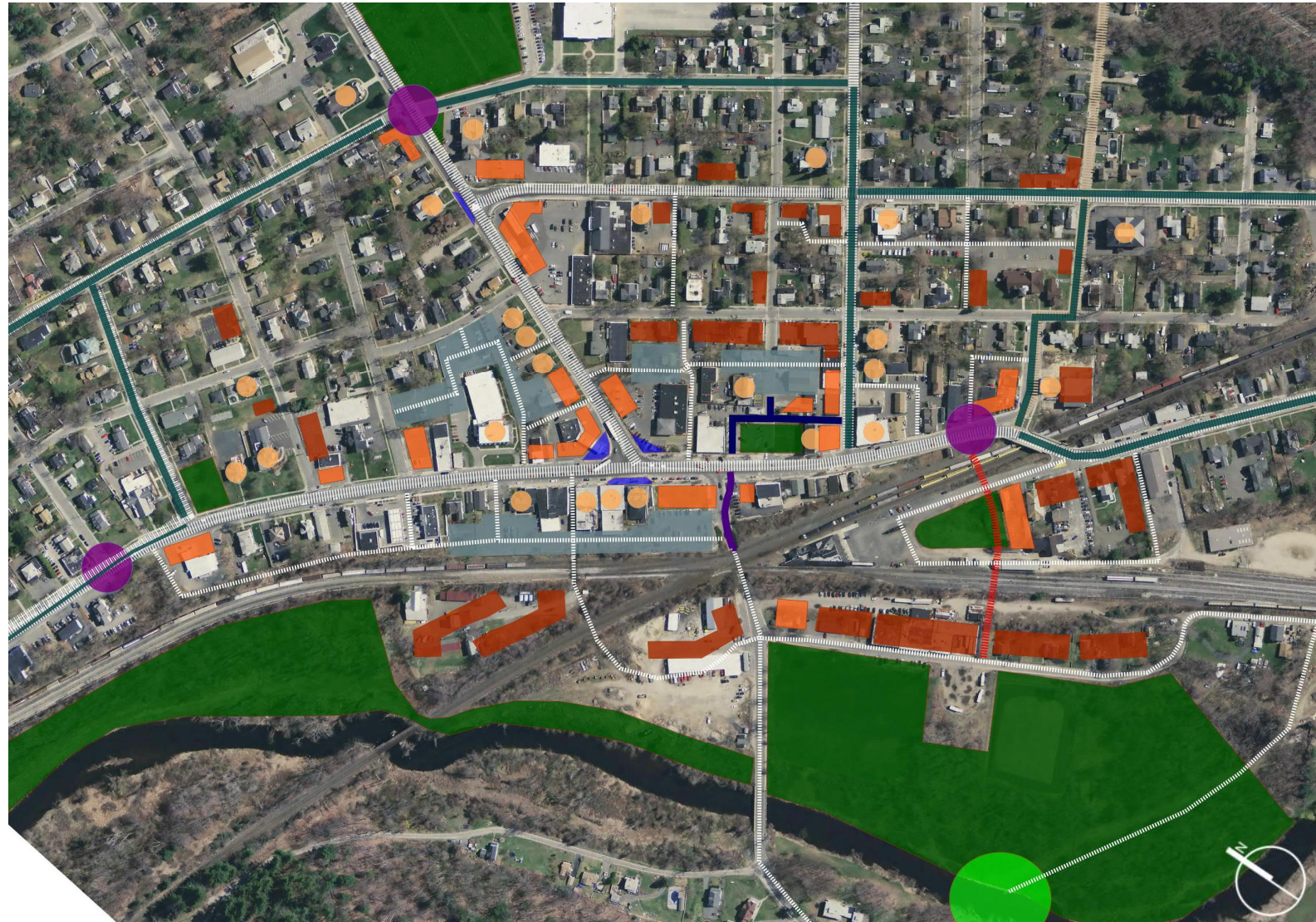







Economic Development Opportunities

Consultants Preliminary Assessment Criteria: A Windshield Assessment

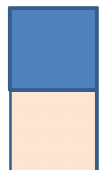
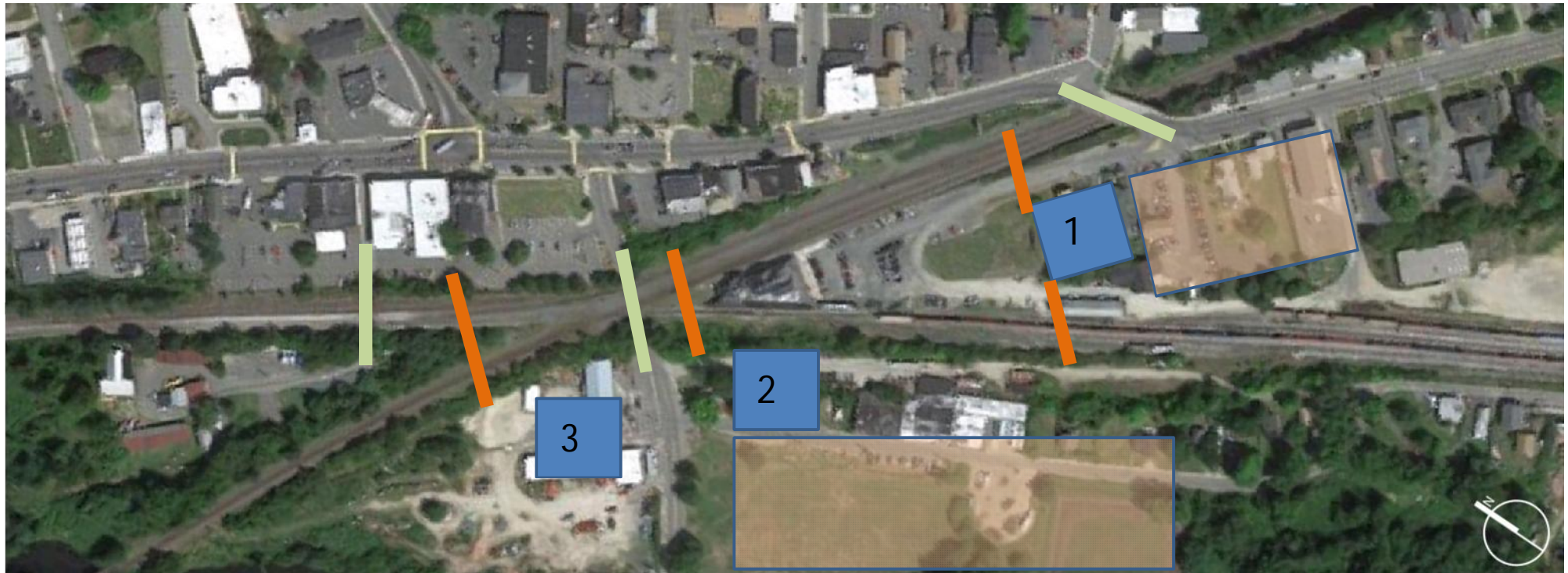
- Identification of possible cultural / historic structures
 - Preserve / rehabilitate / repurpose (if applicable)
- Available / underutilized land
 - Vacant land (not much) / inefficient block patterns and parking areas
- Potential for parcel consolidations
- Deteriorating / underutilized structures
- Opportunities for increased density
- Scale and character of existing downtown fabric
- Location within the context of downtown definition
- Proximity to future transit center
- Redevelopment assumptions
 - Owner participation and cooperation
 - Parcel and parking sharing and consolidation
 - Supportive municipal codes

-  GATEWAY AREA
-  MIXED USE GROUND FLOOR RETAIL 2-4 STORIES
-  MIXED OR SINGLE USE 2-3 STORIES
-  EX. / PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
-  ARCHITECTURALLY SIGNIFICANT
-  HARDSCAPE PLAZA
-  BIKE LANES
-  MUNICIPAL / SHARED PARKING



-  ON STREET PARALLEL
-  ON STREET PULL IN
-  LANDSCAPED MEDIAN
-  PUBLIC / SHARED PARKING LOT
-  INTERNAL BLOCK CONNECTIONS





Facility Options

Parking Field Options

Existing Track Crossings

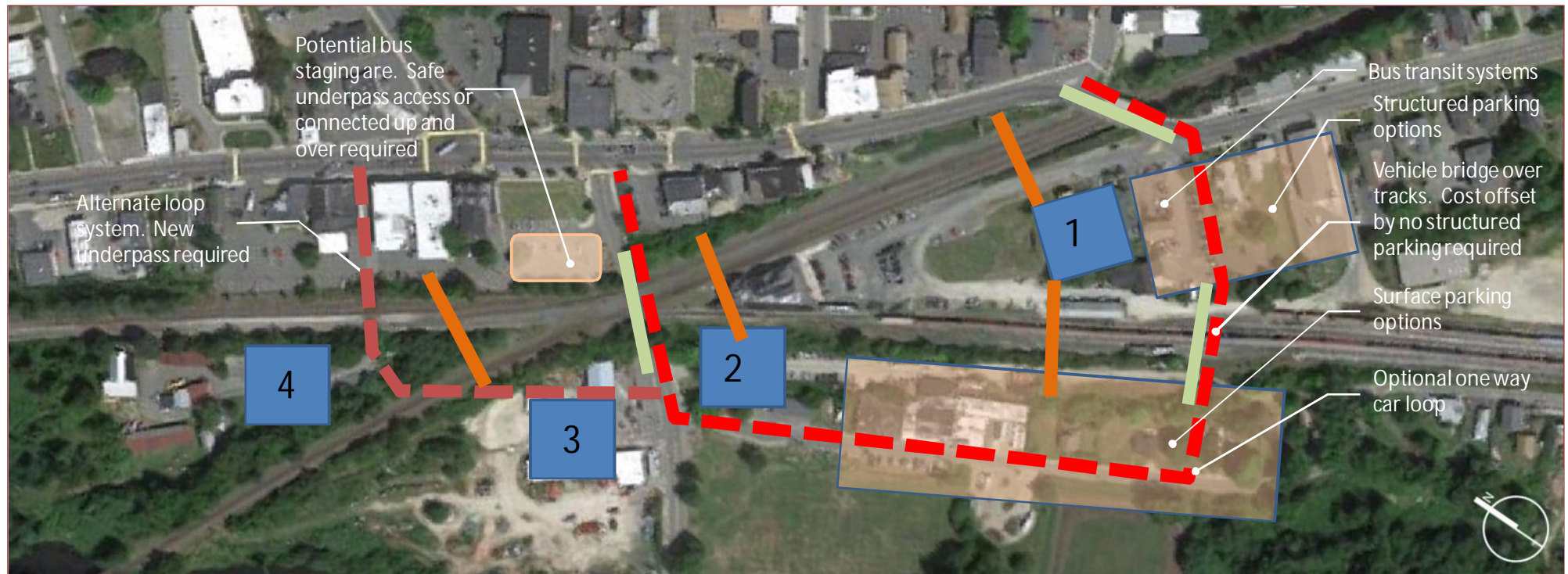
Up And Over Options

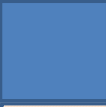



General Criteria

- Proximity to Downtown
- Regional Bus Access
- Safe Bike / Ped. Access
- Parking +/- 400 spaces
- Access N / S and E / W Platforms

Issues

- Underpasses can not accommodate buses
- Underpasses can not accommodate both two way traffic and bike ped. access
- DPW yard Public Land, other sites = private ownership
- Additional bridges / up and overs
- Structured or Surface Parking



-  Facility Options
-  Parking Field Options
-  Existing Track Crossings
-  Up And Over Options

Issues

- Site #1: Difficult pedestrian access, furthest from downtown core
- Site #2&3: Difficult bus access. Additional bridge or expanded underpass required. One way loop recommended to provide pedestrian access.

Next Steps

- Work with local and state representatives on next tier study funding
- Secure a position as a reviewer on the forthcoming state transportation plan
- Position Palmer for additional funding / study
 - Develop and submit Urban Redevelopment Plan per state statutes
 - Develop TOD plan that is supported by the community
 - Show the state that Palmer is poised and ready to go
 - Quantify real economic development impacts associated with rail
 - Show the development community that opportunities are coming
- Seek available funding predicated on a plan
 - Once state invests.....they are invested
 - State will support success if vested
- Protect downtown from unwanted development form or uses
 - Potential short term zoning controls
 - Downtown guidelines tied to zoning approval

Discussion